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"HELL:"

A POEM.

BY THE AUTHOR OF
"PATERNAL ADMONITION."



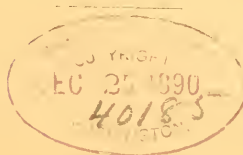


HELL:

A Poem.

BY THE AUTHOR OF
"PATERNAL ADMONITION."

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HELL.

Some people say there is a hell
Where wicked souls are doomed to go ;
But this, by others, is denied,
Who hold there is no hell below.
I've often heard the place described
By certain preachers in my day,
And trembled like an aspen leaf,
As they its horrors did portray.

That such a place does not exist
I will not undertake to say ;
Nor, from the knowledge I possess,
Can I assert the other way.
That there's a hell, or that there's not,
Is more than mortal man can know ;
And in the soul's eternal flight
There's none can say where it shall go.

Were I to say there is a hell,
Can I, with proof, support the plea ?
Did I allege there's no such place,
How can I prove it so to be ?

No matter what I choose to say,
 The mystery remains the same ;
 But why should hell be made for men,
 Who know not how nor whence they came ?

If such a place has been prepared
 For erring mortals here below,
 Can His chief attribute be love,
 Who, by His will, ordained it so ?
 'Tis said that man is born in sin,
 And all because one Adam fell,
 And though his fall was pre-designed,
 His erring sons must go to hell.

When man was formed, the great I Am
 Approvingly the work surveyed ;
 And perfect from the Author's hand,
 In God's own image he was made ;
 But lest he perfect should remain,
 A tree was planted by on High,
 With this injunction: " Eat thereof,
 And on that day thou'lt surely die."

" Believe it not," the serpent said,
 " Partake thereof and thou shalt see,
 That it is good for man to eat
 The fruit that grows upon that tree."
 Then Eve, as though not satisfied
 With all that in the garden grew,
 By way of dessert, had to go
 And eat the cursed apple, too.

Then Adam, like a simpleton,
 To make his ordained fall complete,
 Advised by Eve, naught else would do,
 But he must take the fruit and eat ;
 And thus sin came into the world,
 And thereby death to all mankind ;
 And all because poor Adam did
 What God above had pre-designed.

When they had eaten of the fruit,
 Their eyes were opened where they stood ;
 And for the first time then they knew
 That they were absolutely nude.
 And thus it was they came to know
 That male and female they were made ;
 But they such knowledge to obtain,
 Divine command had disobeyed.

If by their eating of the fruit,
 Each other they could only know,
 Then plain it is, that from the first,
 The great Creator willed it so ;
 Because when God created man,
 He said: " Be fruitful, multiply,"
 Then told him not to eat the fruit,
 For if he did, he'd surely die.

And thus was Adam left to choose
 Between " Be fruitful, multiply,"
 And " Eat not of forbidden fruit,
 For if you do, thou'lt surely die."

Was not this too severe a test
 That Adam had to undergo ?
 Because the fruit he had to eat,
 If he his wife should ever know.

As though God could not bear the heat,
 So writers of the Bible say,
 Before he ventured out to walk,
 He waited 'till the cool of day.
 And as he walked in Eden's shades,
 Where Adam and his wife were placed,
 They heard his voice and ran away,
 And hid themselves in greatest haste.

God called to Adam : " Where art thou ? "
 And Adam, answ'ring, to him said,
 " I heard thy voice and hid myself,
 For I was naked and afraid."
 No fear expressed of punishment,
 For any wrong that he had done ;
 But when he heard the voice of God,
 'Twas being naked made him run.

" Who told thee that thou naked wast ?
 Hast thou been eating of the tree,
 'Gainst eating which thou wert enjoined,
 And whereof I commanded thee ? "
 Then making answer, Adam said,
 " It is the woman is to blame,
 She ate the fruit, declared it good,
 And tempted me to do the same."

Said God to Eve : "What hast thou done?"

And she, as simple as a child,
 Answering said unto the Lord,
 "I by the serpent was beguiled."
 Then next the serpent God addressed,
 "Because thou tempted Adam's wife,
 Upon thy belly thou shalt go,
 And eat of dust thy length of life."

"Above all beasts and cattle, too,
 Thou art accurs'd, and still shalt be,
 And 'tween the woman and thyself,
 There shall be endless enmity."
 And thus we learn from holy writ
 How 'twas the serpent came to crawl,
 But are not told how it did move
 Before the time of Adam's fall.

And from the text we must infer,
 That ere the time of Adam's fall,
 Beasts must have undergone a curse,
 But now the serpent more than all;
 For if on cattle of the field
 No curse upon them had been laid,
 How could it be the serpent's curse,
 Than theirs, still greater should be made?

God spake again to Eve and said,
 "For what thou'st done, this I will do,
 Thy sorrow I will multiply,
 And likewise thy conception, too ;

In sorrow children thou shalt bear,
 And thy desire now shall be
 Unto the husband thou didst tempt,
 And he shall lord it over thee."

Then unto Adam spake the Lord,
 So Moses would have us believe,
 And there on him he did pronounce,
 The sentence that he should receive :
 "Thou'st eaten of forbidden fruit,
 And here no longer shalt thou dwell,
 And for thy disobedient act
 Thee from this garden I expel."

"And for thy sake curs'd is the ground,
 And henceforth be it understood,
 That thorns and thistles it shall yield,
 And herbs shall be thy daily food ;
 And to the earth shalt thou return,
 From which thy body hast been ta'en,
 For thou art nothing more than dust,
 To dust thou shalt return again."

"From this delightful garden here,
 Thee I will banish with thy wife,
 I'll keep thee out with flaming sword,
 Lest thou should'st eat the tree of life."
 Then forth as wanderers they went,
 To find some other place to dwell,
 But in the sentence there pronounced,
 God did not even mention hell.

Then Adam came to know his wife,
 And she conceived and brought forth Cain ;
 In course of time was Abel born,
 And by his brother he was slain ;
 All this in scripture is laid down,
 And holy writ has made it known ;
 And preachers have declared since then,
 We must accept it all or none.

And thus began the human race,
 If Moses is to be believed ;
 But writing at the time he did,
 He might himself have been deceived ;
 For twenty centuries had passed,
 Since Adam in the grave was laid,
 When Moses undertook to tell
 How all created things were made.

Thus far there's nothing heard of hell,
 No mention made of such a place
 As having been prepared by God,
 For sinful men who fall from grace.
 But priestcraft came, then hell was made,
 A burning lake, intensely hot,
 Where endless torments waited those
 Who did not worship as they taught.

Had Adam disregarded Eve,
 And let the fruit untouched remain,
 Then sin to man would be unknown,
 And hell would wait for souls in vain.

But this, of course, would never do,
 The great Creator had a plan,
 And long before the world was made
 Had foreordained the fall of man.

When man had lost his high estate,
 'Twas part of God's eternal scheme,
 That he should send His only Son,
 Whose death the guilty should redeem.
 What else could Adam do than eat
 The fruit of the forbidden tree,
 Since such was foreordained by Him,
 Who was, and is, and is to be?

One thousand years, or nearly so,
 Did Adam on the earth reside,
 And when his lengthened days were run,
 He peacefully lay down and died.
 And thus from earth he passed away,
 His soul had winged its final flight;
 Did it ascend to realms of bliss,
 Or sink into eternal night?

Four thousand years from Adam's time,
 One virgin Mary did conceive;
 And unto her a child was born,
 To save all those who would believe.
 Thus to mankind a Saviour came,
 Who died a ransom for us all;
 But till he came what had become,
 Of all who died since Adam's fall?

What Saviour died to ransom them?
 Whose blood cleansed them from guilty stain?
 If goats and kids sufficed for them,
 Why should, for us, the Lamb be slain?
 To them was given for their guide
 The law Divine and Prophets, too;
 If these were all sufficient then,
 Why not suffice for me and you?

But Christ was born, whose blood alone
 The lost and ruined can reclaim;
 Yet millions of the human race
 Have never even heard His name.
 When these from earth have passed away,
 Where shall their souls immortal dwell?
 Because they never heard of Christ,
 Must they forever scorch in hell?

Ah, surely not, if God is love,
 No loving father would decree
 His child to be forever damned,
 However erring it might be;
 But why should those who know not Christ,
 When they have passed beyond the grave,
 Escape the punishment of hell,
 If He, and He alone, can save?

If, from the first, God had a Son,
 Who should to save mankind descend,
 How he could be of woman born
 Is more than I can comprehend;

Yet preachers threaten us with hell,
 Unless we earnestly believe
 That Mary, in her virgin state,
 Did God's begotten Son conceive.

God is the Father of us all,
 With Him there's no dividing line ;
 And Christian, Pagan, Heathen, Jew,
 All share his boundless love divine.
 If He a Saviour had prepared,
 Who should for sinful man atone,
 Why should four thousand years pass by
 Before that Saviour was made known ?

And what is life ? The spirit pow'r,
 By which our actions we control,
 Which God imparted unto man,
 And made of him a living soul.
 And what is death ? The final sleep,
 When soul and body say farewell ;
 The one to mingle with the dust,
 And one to go where spirits dwell.

Delightful voices oft we hear,
 Although the forms we can not see ;
 They come like echoes from afar
 Or whispers from eternity ;
 They come, but how we can not tell,
 From whence, we do not understand ;
 They sweetly glide across the soul,
 Like rippling waters o'er the sand.

It may be dear, kind mother's voice,
 That speaks to us of deathless love ;
 It may be that of darling child,
 That brings a message from above ;
 Whence come these voices, which, to hear,
 Makes heart and soul with joy expand,
 Until our very thoughts are borne
 To blissful realms of spirit-land ?

Desponding soul, awake to joy !
 Despair is not thy final doom ;
 Death's shadow's but a passing cloud,
 And Hope illuminates the tomb ;
 Though preachers preach of endless hell,
 Where unbelievers all are sent,
 Kind, loving Nature cries aloud
 Against eternal punishment.

Is there no heav'n for righteous souls ?
 No hell for those who fall from grace ?
 When we are laid within the tomb,
 Where is the spirit's resting place ?
 Heaven is hope beyond the grave,
 Which comforts mortals here below ;
 But that a burning hell exists,
 Believing God, I answer no.

If God is love, which I believe,
 And if his love extends to all,
 'Tis strange that Christ came not to earth
 About the time of Adam's fall.

Then Adam would have had a chance,
 And all his progeny as well,
 To wash in the atoning blood
 Or die, uncleansed, and go to hell.

And blood-stained Cain, what hope for him?
 Upon what Christ could he rely?
 Before what cross could he kneel down,
 And find the blood to purify?
 Succeeding ages passed away,
 And millions lived, and also died,
 And to eternal rest were borne,
 For whom no Christ was crucified.

If racking pain, heartrending grief,
 The suff'rings mortals undergo;
 If want and sorrow, sighs and tears,
 And untold wretchedness and woe;
 If these are not sufficient hell
 To satisfy a loving God,
 Can he be merciful who would
 Still punish with severer rod?

But do the sinful of this world,
 Whose wicked hearts have Christ denied,
 Sit side by side in paradise
 With those redeemed and purified?
 Redeemed and purified by what?
 The blood of Christ shed on the tree?
 But what of all the sons of God,
 Who never heard of Calvary?

Good thoughts in mind, good actions wrought,
 Kind words, and deeds of charity,
 A helping hand in time of need,
 'Tis these that God delights to see.
 Nor will he question what our creed,
 Or at what shrine we knelt to pray ;
 Good deeds find favor in his sight,
 Be forms of worship what they may.

If I take reason for my guide,
 And follow where it points the way,
 Why God should have prepared a hell
 Is really more than I can say ;
 For man, 'tis said, was perfect made,
 In God's own image formed was he ;
 He lives, he dies, his soul departs,
 And goes into eternity.

The wicked soul will find its place,
 And join its kindred over there ;
 And brighter homes will be for those
 Refined and purified by prayer ;
 Ascending high and higher still,
 And still progressing as they go,
 Until they join the perfect throng,
 As pure and spotless as the snow.

But should I reason cast aside,
 Like ship betossed I then should be,
 With sail, and helm, and compass lost,
 Adrift upon the stormy sea.

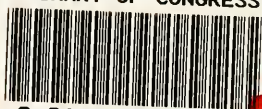
Of this I'm sure, we nothing lose
 By doing all the good we can,
 Nor will it make our chances worse
 To love and help our fellow-man.

What lies beyond the vale of death,
 Theology can not explain;
 But this we know, the seed that dies
 Springs forth to life and light again.
 Man's thoughts may soar to lofty heights,
 But spirit-land he cannot see;
 Nor can his gaze extend beyond
 The verge of vast eternity.

Be, then, content, vain, boastful man;
 Great truths from thee are yet concealed;
 And what's beyond the mystic veil,
 To spirits only is revealed;
 Kind mother Nature gives to thee
 A place upon her loving breast;
 Thy spirit she will not forsake
 When thou art laid away to rest.

Cheer up, despairing, downcast soul,
 A brighter dawn will break for thee;
 And in delightful spirit-land,
 Again loved faces you will see,
 Behold sweet Nature's smiling face,
 And all thy gloomy doubts expel;
 Eternal Truth and Love proclaim
 There is no everlasting hell.

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